

## Message Text

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60

ORIGIN ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EPA-04 SCI-06 CEQ-02 COME-00 EB-11

INT-08 IO-12 AID-20 NSF-04 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12

CIAE-00 INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 /111 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ MEX: TRMARTIN: AC

3/16/73 EXT 21317

APPROVED BY ARA/ MEX: CPTORREY

EPA: LLOYD GEBHARDT

US- IBWC: FSACKSTEDER

----- 078548

R 162219 Z MAR 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS STATE 049235

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: TBIO, MX

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON RIO GRANDE CONTAMINATION

REF: MEXICO 1458

1. EPA REPORTS THAT AT THE TIME OF THE WIDE PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT MERCURY IN 1970 IT CONDUCTED AN EXTENSIVE SURVEY OF ALL US WATERS WHERE MERCURY MIGHT BE PRESUMED TO BE PRESENT. ITS DALLAS FIELD OFFICE INVESTIGATED THE RIO GRANDE. THIS INVESTIGATION REVEALED ONLY ONE POTENTIAL SOURCE, A MINE AT TERLINGUA JUST WEST OF BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK. THAT MINE HAS BEEN CLOSED, HOWEVER, AND HAS NOT OPERATED SINCE JUNE 1971. WATER SAMPLES TAKEN IN THE COURSE OF THE INVESTIGATION SHOWED THE MERCURY CONTENT OF THE RIO GRANDE FAR BELOW THE LIMITS ESTABLISHED FOR PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH. THE GENERAL CONCLUSION WAS THAT CONTAMINATION IN THE RIVER WAS NEGLIGIBLE AND THE SOURCE OF THAT SLIGHT CONTAMINATION UNKNOWN.

2. IN DECEMBER 1972 THE OFFICIAL EPA PESTICIDE MONITOR-  
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ING JOURNAL ( VOL. VI, NO. 3) PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE ENTITLED " MERCURY RESIDUE IN FISH". IT REPORTED THE RESULTS OF AN ANALYSIS FOR THE PERIOD 1969-70 OF THE MERCURY CONTENT OF FISH TAKEN FROM THE RIO GRANDE AT BROWNSVILLE. THE ARTICLE REPORTED AN AVERAGE FINDING OF 0.09 PPM, THE HIGHEST SINGLE FINDING BEING 0.17. THESE FIGURES COMPARE WITH THE MAXIMUM OF 0.5 PPM ALLOWED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION.

3. EPA' S DALLAS REGIONAL OFFICE PLANS TO TAKE ADDITIONAL SAMPLES AT TERLINGUA THIS SPRING.

4. THE EMBASSY MAY IN ITS DISCRETION INFORM APPROPRIATE MEXICAN AUTHORITIES OF THE FOREGOING AND STATE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING ANY INFORMATION THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT HAS REGARDING MERCURY CONTAMINATION OF THE RIO GRANDE OR ANY OTHER INTERNATIONAL RIVER. THIS GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO BE GLAD TO JOIN MEXICAN AUTHORITIES IN ANY STUDY THEY MAY WISH TO MAKE OF MERCURY AND POSSIBLY OTHER FORMS OF POLLUTION RELATING TO THE RIO GRANDE. ROGERS

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* UNCLASSIFIED

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**TAGS:** TBIO, MX  
**To:** MEXICO  
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